

WHITE RIVER SCHOOL
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Dear Families:

Snow Clothes

Students need to bring winter gear with them to school every day: warm coat (not just a sweatshirt), snowpants, boots, mittens/gloves. I have a few extra pairs of mittens in the room just in case, but these tend to go quickly. If you don't own any of these things, let us know and we can find some for your child for the season. If students aren't wearing snowpants, they will have to stick to the blacktop at recess (no fort building or sledding in the snow).

December Holidays

As part of our social studies curriculum in first grade, we study holidays and traditions. This month we are reading books about Christmas, Kwanzaa, and Hanukkah and the associated traditions. We will do a few activities related to these traditions, including learning to play dreidel and making an mkeka (em-kay-kah), a woven placement for Kwanzaa.

Reading strategies to help your child read

Becoming a better reader means using meaning, structure or syntax, and visual information to help you as they read. There are many strategies a good reader uses when encountering a tricky word; there is more to reading than "sounding it out." Tapping out a word is a useful and smart strategy when reading a short consonant-vowel-consonant word like "cat" or "tip." But for a word like "land," a good strategy is to notice the chunk of that word that you know. Once students see "and" in "land" they can put together the sound of the "l" with "-and." Another strategy is recognizing high-frequency words that we have on our word wall that students begin to memorize and know on sight (sometimes called "sight words", in our Foundations phonics program we call them trick words because they can be tricky and can't always be tapped out)—words like are, have, one, and was. I thought I'd share these and some other strategies I've taught, in hopes that you might find some of them useful to suggest or notice and affirm when reading with your child at home.

Use Meaning as a Source of Information:

- If it's a "pattern book," use the word patterns on every page to understand the meaning of your book. If the pattern on every page is "I like to _____," then the book is all about things the character likes to do. It's important to be able to summarize what a book is about.
- Often pictures tell us what some of the words are. It's okay to use the picture; there is a reason pictures are a part of children's books! Many first-grade books involve patterns, but looking at the picture can hint at the words that do not repeat.
- When we read, it's always good to notice when things don't make sense. Don't just keep plowing ahead when this happens.

- As we read, in addition to following what characters are doing, we can also imagine what the characters in our books are thinking and feeling. Stop every few pages to think about/discuss this.

Using Structure/Syntax as a Source of Information:

- One thing to try when you get to a word you don't know is to think, "what would *sound* right here?" This strategy works well with words that can't be figured out easily from the picture, such as have, with, when, etc. Read the whole sentence, saying "blank" in place of the unknown word, then go back and think about what sounds right.
- When we read, it's good to notice when things *don't* sound right. Children usually listen carefully, think about, and enjoy books when adults read, but they need to learn to do that monitoring when they read, too. They need to learn to notice when they read "My friend like to play" or "She runned to the park" that it doesn't sound right and to try again.

Using Visual Cues as a Source of Information:

- When you use the picture to help you read, make sure to look also at the word to see if the sounds of the word and your guess match. Using picture cues is a good strategy, best in conjunction with checking the visual cues of the word itself. If a student sees a picture of a bunny on the page, that's a good guess for what the word says, but they need to also notice when the word starts with "r" and then be able to figure out that it must say "rabbit" instead.
- Use your fingers to "frame" a tricky word to help you focus on it and see it better.
- If you have trouble figuring out a word, it can help to see if you recognize a part of that word. For example, knowing "to" can help you read "tomorrow," and knowing "and" can help with "hand."

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